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ABSTRACT

This study examined the social impact of online, Web-based, distance learning (OWDL) technology on students enrolled in health, physical education, and recreation (HPER) Master's degree level courses as compared to students in traditional classroom courses. Surveys were developed and mailed to 137 students in both types of classrooms. The surveys included an online and a traditional version of the Social Impact Survey of Distance Learning in Higher Education on Health, Physical Education, and Recreation Students. Results indicated that well-planned, carefully crafted OWDL courses met students' needs. Listservs, voice mail, fax mail, forum discussions, and e-mail were basic components of the distance learning process. Collectively, they were highly effective in providing materials and communication between students and instructors. OWDL students had more time to think and respond to questions, worked more efficiently and productively at their own pace, had more discretionary time, and had more written assignments (which improved their writing skills). Respondents felt they were more likely to bond in traditional courses. Students considered forum discussions more interactive than the traditional classroom equivalent. The surveys and graphs are appended. (Contains 45 references.) (SM)